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*Writing creatively for work or study:
Easy techniques to engage your readers*

Helen Kara

Manchester University Press (2025)

192 pp (including index)

ISBN 978 1 5261 7845 9

<https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526178459/>

Review by Linda Baines, first published online 17 June 2025 and will appear in Volume 11 of *The Independent Scholar*.

This gem of a book (60,000 words) is packed with ideas, examples and advice on how to practise creating writing techniques in business and professional writing. The author, Helen Kara, is an independent scholar, a member of NCIS, and founder and organiser of the International Creative Research Methods Conference (ICRMC - <https://creativeresearchmethods.com>). She teaches on and has written books about creative research methods, and on using creative writing techniques in academic writing.¹ Her new book is different as the author shifts her gaze to focus on using creative techniques for writing in the workplace.

By 'workplace', the author means using creative writing techniques in writing that we do at work, in our

professional lives. For academics and independent scholars, this can include writing anything from reports, social media posts, case studies and reports, letters and emails, in fact anything that is not academic writing.

The book seeks to show how using creative writing techniques, such as poetry, which the reader may not have considered using in business and professional writing, can be useful in writing in the workplace and in non-fiction writing more generally. The book aims to explain and use different creative writing techniques in these kinds of writing. The author argues that using creative writing techniques can make writing more accessible to a wider range of people: it does this by engaging readers' emotions, keeping them interested,

¹ Creative Writing for Social Research: A Practical Guide
Richard Phillips and Helen Kara. 2021. Policy Press. £27.99
(Paperback)

<https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/creative-writing-for-social-research>

and helping them to remember what they have read. Using creative writing techniques can also make writing more authentic.

The book comprises an introduction and conclusion, with seven chapters focusing on different genres of creative writing, with a penultimate chapter focusing on good practice in writing. In the Introduction, the author looks at why we might want to use creative writing techniques in workplace writing. The rest of the book looks in detail about how and when to use various kinds of creative writing techniques or genres of creative writing.

In Chapters 1 – 7, the author explores a particular kind of creative writing and different forms or approaches within each genre. Each chapter concludes with a 'Try it yourself' or exercise, usually suggesting options or different ways to approach them. Each chapter also includes notes and references.

In Chapter 8, the author moves away from exploring genres of creative writing to focus on good practice in writing. Here she considers issues such as grammar ('the rules of language'), different myths about writing, dealing with your inner critic, and identifying your audience.

The author argues that all writing is creative, both at word and macro level; writing is an embodied process, physically (we use our bodies to write) and emotionally (when we write, we express our feelings, thoughts and reflections). The author observes that the emotional aspect of writing is rarely discussed; this is something that she seeks to explore in the book. She observes that a reader can take something from a piece of writing that the writer did not intend them to do so; this reaction can be prompted by the reader's experience or what is happening in the world more generally.

The author argues that the writer can have three roles: as a teacher, as a therapist, and as a friend. In writing as a teacher, the author shows how writing, particularly freewriting or directed freewriting (using prompts to focus our writing) can help us work through our thoughts and ideas about a topic by putting them on the page. The author suggests different ways of approaching this.

Writing can be therapeutic and reflective; writing can be cathartic as it offers a space and a way to express our feelings and reactions, to externalise our thinking, to put what we feel on to the page, and helps us to put

some distance between what is going on in our heads, especially in turbulent or difficult times; writing offers a way to release and express these emotions. Cathartic writing includes memoir, autoethnography and poetry where these can be by-products of cathartic writing.

Writing can also be a friend; it is always available. The author acknowledges that writing can be difficult, a chore, something that we procrastinate about doing. She argues that experimenting with using different creative writing techniques, experimenting with using different genres, can be a way to get to dislike the process of writing less, to make it more interesting and enjoyable.

The author argues that writing is a visual representation of speech. She shows how graphic writing in the form of cartoons, comics, graphic novels and zines can be used in creative writing. She argues that the boundary between drawing and writing is fluid; for example, cartoons are vehicles for storytelling. Essentially, writing is a visual representation of speech.

The author is very much aware that there can be limited scope to use creative writing approaches in some kinds of writing in the workplace; for example, where strict formats or templates are used for reports or case notes. She also understands why non-fiction writers may be wary about using creative writing techniques, and that they may not know where to start. She encourages readers to explore, without any pressure, and to do so for fun.

The book includes much practical advice, and many ideas and suggestions. Different readers will get different things from the book and find different things to come back to. The most interesting chapters for this reviewer are Chapter 1 – Storytelling, Chapter 2 – Writing from life, Chapter 3 – Poetry, and Chapter 7 – The personal is professional. This is a practical and insightful book to come back to time and again for ideas, insights and reassurance. Highly recommended.

Linda Baines, PhD is an independent scholar and President of NCIS (National Coalition of Independent Scholars). She undertook her PhD at Southampton Business School, University of Southampton where she now holds an honorary position as a Visiting Academic. With Amanda Haste, she co-edited the [NCIS Guide for Independent Scholars](#).